WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system-updating method for updating software installed in a user computer system, said method comprising the steps of:

acquiring user computer system information including information on hardware employed in said user computer system and information on said software installed in said user computer system;

constructing a test environment for testing operations of said user computer system on the basis of said acquired user computer system information;

updating said software in said test environment by using a software-updating patch;

determining whether or not said operations of said user computer system are carried out normally by execution of said updated software in said test environment; and

supplying said software-updating patch to said user computer system and using said software-updating patch to update said software installed in said user computer system if said operations of said user computer system are determined to be normal.

2. A system-updating method according to claim 1, wherein said user computer system comprises a means for monitoring said user computer system information and a means for updating said software installed in said user computer

system; and

wherein said user computer system acquires said software-updating patch and uses said software-updating patch to update a piece of software installed in said user computer

5   system without halting execution of a program included said piece of software.

3. A system-updating method according to claim 1 wherein said user computer system:

acquires a result of a test conducted to determine whether

10   or not said operations of said user computer system are carried out normally by execution of said updated software in said test environment;

shows said result to a user; and

asks said user a question as to whether or not said software

15   installed in said user computer system is to be updated.

4. A system-updating method for updating software installed in a user computer system as software to be updated by using a software-updating patch received from a vendor computer system, said method comprising the steps of:

20   transmitting information on said user computer system from said user computer system to said vendor computer system;

selecting a proper software-updating patch in said vendor computer system on the basis of said information on said user computer system and transmitting said selected proper

25   software-updating patch to said user computer system;

constructing a test environment on the basis of said

software-updating patch received from said vendor computer system;

using said test environment for evaluating said software-updating patch to give a result of evaluation;

5   using said software-updating patch for updating said software installed in said user computer system if said result of evaluation is good; and

transmitting said result of evaluation to said vendor computer system to prompt said vendor computer system to transmit

10   another software-updating patch if said result of evaluation is bad.

5. A vendor computer system for providing software to a user computer system, said vendor computer system comprising:

a user computer system management unit having a means

15   for receiving information on said user computer system from said user computer system;

a means for constructing a test environment for said user computer system on the basis of said information on said user computer system and a software-updating patch;

20   a means for examining said software-updating patch by using said test environment to determine whether or not said software-updating patch is suitable for said user computer system; and

a means for transmitting said software-updating patch

25   determined to be suitable for said user computer system to said user computer system.

6. A vendor computer system according to claim 5, further comprising:

a means for logically dividing a real machine of said vendor computer system into a plurality of logical partitions; and

a means for constructing said test environment for one of said logical partitions.

7. A vendor computer system according to claim 5, further comprising:

a means for recording said software-updating patch in a patch database; and

a means for accepting a request to update said user computer system from said user computer system and retrieving a software-updating patch proper for said request to update said user computer system from said patch database.

8. A vendor computer system according to claim 5, further comprising:

a means for recording information received from said user computer system as said information on said user computer system in a user computer system-information database; and

a means for retrieving said information on said user computer system from said user computer system-information database.

9. A user computer system receiving software from a vendor computer system, said user computer system comprising:

a means for transmitting information on said user computer

system to said vendor computer system;

a means for receiving a software-updating patch from said vendor computer system;

a means for constructing a test environment on the basis of a software-updating patch received from said vendor computer system and said information on said user computer system;

a means for evaluating said software-updating patch by using said test environment to give a result of evaluation; and

a means for transmitting said result of evaluation to said vendor computer system.

10. A user computer system according to claim 9, further comprising:

a means for logically dividing a real machine of said user computer system into a plurality of logical partitions; and

a means for constructing said test environment for one of said logical partitions.